

EXAMINING BOARDS OF NURSES AND THEIR POWERS

- a. Reciprocal Relations between States
- b. State Census of Training-Schools
- c. The Inspection of Training-Schools

By MISS M. E. CAMERON

New York City

"When, about a month ago, I received from Miss Nutting the request to read a paper entitled 'Examining Board of Nurses and Their Powers' before this assembly, I was caught in a fit of amiability, such as comes but rarely, and with very little thought beyond being complaisant accepted the task most cheerfully. Since then there has come time for reflection, and I stand before you as one of those who 'rush in where angels fear to tread.' Like the little boy from Boston, I have taken a bite which overtaxes my masticating powers.

"Remembering the papers on this subject of a year ago, and also the reprint in the JOURNAL from the 'Report of the International Council of Nurses,' there is little room for anything in my mind but amazement at my own temerity. The subject of Examining Boards of Nurses is a very new one; indeed, the Examining Board may be considered as our youngest child, the infant to whom we are come, like the fairy god-mothers in the old tale, each bringing our gift of a good wish. It is little to bring, but woe betide us if we do not bring it. It is not yet two years since the New York State Board of Examiners held its first meeting, so that to call upon that or any other State Board of Nurse Examiners for results or experiences would indeed be unreasonable, and very like expecting a newborn child to speak. Yet this State board has shown us some good work and has been characterized by a dignity and harmony of action that give rise to great expectations of what it yet shall do. Whatever the inauguration of the State board may be,—and the different States have so far manifested a desire to express a certain individuality of opinion as to how the Boards of Examiners shall be constituted,—there is to be observed a certain tuning to one note—a bringing of the individual aspect of each State into harmony with a great and democratic idea of registration for nurses—not State registration only. If this idea grows with the growth of registration, it seems reasonable to hope that here we have the key to the problem of the future—reciprocal relations between States in the nursing profession. There must of necessity be a certain uniformity of standards, for we want no such idea of democracy as permits the nurse who has obtained her training where she can do so with the very least sacrifice of time and trouble to herself, and who is careless of her reputation morally and

indifferent to the good name of the profession, to stand shoulder to shoulder with the one who, having a high ideal, lives up to it, and thereby becomes a foundation stone, along with others of her kind, upon which foundation those who come after may safely build. The divorce laws of this country furnish us with a good illustration of the futility of a good law in one State which needs only a trolley-ride of a few miles or a trip on a ferry-boat to carry one beyond its pale. Uniformity of standards, uniformity of curricula—these are signposts for the guidance of those States which are still unorganized. We are a very tremendous body according to the report of the United States Bureau of Education, which gives the number of schools training nurses throughout the Union in the year 1903 as five hundred and fifty-two, and the number of pupils for the same year under instruction as thirteen thousand seven hundred and seventy-nine. The rapid growth of this department of education is shown by a glance at the table of comparative statistics. I need only trouble you to compare the above figures with those of 1880, when the number of schools given is fifteen, the number of pupils, three hundred and twenty-three. A foreigner might ask, 'How is this great body, mostly of women, governed?' and it seems a curious fact that it has been almost without laws until the present era. We have been children hitherto and have not come under the law, but surely the time has come for us to accept our responsibilities, and is it not possible that legislation can be made so that it will fit both East and West and North and South? Foolish optimism it may be to aim beyond what other professions have reached in the matter of reciprocity, but may it not be possible? Somewhere recently I came across the statement that mathematics was the one universal language—everywhere in all the world two and two make four; so I think nursing in its larger things is universal—lesions of the body, dissolution and death, are they not the same everywhere? and wherever proper attention is paid to such changes as go on in our bodies, whether building up or breaking down, there is the possibility of universal practice, and the way to it lies by having our laws in this country at least uniform—not an easy, slipshod, miry lane in one State and a high-walled-glass-on-top-private road in the next—not such laws as allow the offenders in one State to flaunt it with the best by stepping across the boundary into the next, but laws which shall make for us one broad, straight, permanent way, leading to better and better things. Let us have interstate reciprocity by all means, if it be granted only between those States which realize what it is we aim for, and are willing to join in the effort to keep the nursing profession on the forward march.

"State census for training-schools suggests a way for strengthening our organization movement. At present there are, according to the

'United States Bureau of Education Report,' States which may be regarded as virgin soil wherein no man has drawn his plough or planted seed. There is Florida with its one hospital of fifty beds, Montana with one hospital of twenty-four beds, a school of three pupils, and a graduating class of two. The weaker schools in all States could be uncovered by means of State census, and from being a menace, as they now are, continually turning an undesirable class of nurses upon the public, they might be turned into places for the employment of such nurses as find it impossible to keep up with the average. A State census would greatly simplify the work of the Examining Boards, for, of course, the census would include a careful rating of all training-schools. This suggests the need again that the Examining Board employ its own inspectors. Even so early as this the New York State Board of Nurse Examiners has discovered that it is imperatively necessary to have a nurse inspector and have petitioned the Board of Regents for the same. So far the request has not been granted. It would appear to be a good test to apply to the good-will and the rectitude of intention of the Board of Regents to press the matter with all the urgency it deserves. We have been accused as a body of being too modest, of not protesting enough, of leaving our representatives in Senate and Assembly in doubt as to whether we really felt deeply interested in the legislation for our own benefit or not; it may be that we shall prevail by our importunities sooner than by the justice of our demands. If all Examining Boards made this nurse inspector one of their first requirements for equipment, it would probably cease to be regarded as a dangerous concession by the Regents or the Governors. Here is a suggestion for displaying our power of combining and working with concerted action—our State bills have room for more such. Inspection of training-schools and the State census of training-schools are so naturally of our office as to be almost synonymous. The State census would form a large item in the report of the Training-School Inspector.

"Upon the finding of the Training-School Inspector the Board of Nurse Examiners should have power to request the withdrawal of the certificate of registration of any registered school unless the said school give evidence of the desire and the power to bring the school up to the proper standard. The time for adjustment and experiment and reorganization could easily be taken right now. There is no need to hurry out class after class of nurses every year. The present supply can meet the demand. There are many excellent nurses who after fifteen or twenty years of careful and painstaking work find themselves regarded as back numbers. They are refused by registries and are forced to accept the humiliating belief that their profession will not last them a

working lifetime. If this is true, it behooves the training-schools to look for the remedy. It may be that the Examining Boards may be able to offer suggestions for a course of post-graduate work which will benefit this older class. It may be that by greatly lessening the stress and strenuousness of training-school life there may not be such a tremendous call on the vitality of the young pupils, so that the reaction may be delayed till late in life.

"We are told by students of social problems that our hospitals are to grow greatly beyond the proportion of the past, that since the application of the dynamo to machine work of all kinds and the consequent increase of the need for speed and deftness in tending the machines, men and women are wrecked and worn out and left to finish out their existence the victims of exhausted energy. This class, we are told, are bound to come back upon the public in the very near future, and that hospital provision will be found necessary for them as chronic and incurable. If it is true that such an unfortunate class is being created by the strenuousness of the times, it should serve as one more argument for an easier, more leisurely, course in the training-schools. The present system has the fault of requiring so much in every department of superintendents no less than those under them, down to the probationer, who, after all, has the easiest billet there is.

"The Inspector of Training-Schools, besides having a very responsible office, has a most interesting field of labor. With the books of the training-school superintendent and the hospital warden at her disposal, with the freedom of the class- and lecture-rooms, the bedside teaching, and the history- and chart-room open to her, the office is not likely to go begging. Surely it is an office worth working for, and one that means a great deal to the Examining Board; it means that the Regents or the Governor—the higher powers, whoever they may be—will be made to see facts from a nursing point of view, with all the significance these facts may have to the whole profession, and not merely as educational and commercial data collected by a layman.

"The strengthening of the Board of Nurse Examiners and its enlargement by the appointment of nurse inspectors seems to be the next task before us. We cannot allow the great body which we represent to be set aside in this matter. The lay inspector has failed us already—allowing the registration of schools which are not eligible. We need our own inspector. The blunder of a lay inspector is probably due to the Board of Regents regarding nurse-training schools as one more department of the Educational Bureau. We must resort to the old remedy of the hair of the dog that has bitten them. We must teach them better."

PRESIDENT.—In accordance with the announcement made, a few moments will be allowed for the discussion of these papers, and as this last one is still fresh in our minds, we will take that one up now and then work towards the top of our programme.

MISS PALMER.—In reference to Miss Cameron's paper I have just one word to say, and that is that if I were going to draft the New York bill over again, with the light that I have had as an examiner, I would include nurse inspectors as one of the necessary conditions as well as nurses on the Board of Examiners.

MISS CABANISS.—In Virginia the members of the Board of Examiners are made State Inspectors of Training-Schools, and each member is assigned a certain locality.

PRESIDENT.—If there is no further discussion, we will pass on to the discussion of army nursing.

MISS MILNE.—I have been requested to ask Mrs. Kinney how many replies she has had for the Eligible Corps of Nurses.

MRS. KINNEY.—Since the subject was first approached there have been from the various alumnae associations thirteen replies; seventy sets of papers were sent out.

MISS PALMER.—I think that perhaps many of the nurses do not read the medical journals very extensively, but the failure of the nurses to coöperate with the Surgeon-General's office in creating this eligible volunteer list has been very severely criticised by some of the leading medical journals of this country.

MISS DAVIS.—I would like to ask Mrs. Kinney if being a foreigner prevents the nurse from presenting herself and being accepted; whether she would have to become a naturalized citizen to join the Army Nurse Corps; for instance, is it compulsory for an English nurse or a Canadian nurse to become a naturalized citizen before she joins the army.

MRS. KINNEY.—When the Spanish-American War was over and the Nurse Corps was being established on permanent lines it was at first a matter of necessity that a woman should either be naturalized or a citizen by birth. Later on, however, this requirement was suspended, as it was not considered expedient to shut out on this ground those who wished to enter the service, although I would state that perhaps the preference is always given to American citizens, as I consider that it should be. I am sure that if I should go to England and want to enter the nursing service there I would hardly be considered an acceptable member; I am perfectly sure that I should not be given a place of any prominence or any distinction, if I was accepted at all, even though I might have represented the American army nurses. There is no law prohibiting the employment of any nurse, but to those on the active list of our Army Nurse Corps we do give the preference to American nurses, but on the Eligible Volunteer List I do not think the question would be brought up at all; if anyone was kind enough to offer her services, she would be received with open arms.

MISS McISAAC.—I want to say that I am ashamed of our nurses. I wish the question about the Canadian and the English and the foreign-born women had not come up, because, certainly, there are enough women born in this country to do this work if we are needed. I want to say that I am ashamed of the American-born nurses to think that such an appeal should be made and have met with no response. I am glad the doctors have criticised it, for we deserve it, and I hope that every single delegate will go home to her alumnae association and repeat this matter. We ought to be ashamed that such a thing as that

could be said about us. If the excitement of war were on we would all be coming forward in a minute, and we would have the same trouble that there was before. Let us prepare now and not have anything like this come up about as again.

MISS NUTTING.—On behalf of the Canadians, who have lived so happily and harmoniously in American environments, I would say that I do not think any Canadian or English woman would ever remember what country she belonged to if there came any need for her services. There is something greater than nationality.

PRESIDENT.—I am sure the list will straightway lengthen.

MRS. KINNEY.—I shall be very glad to receive the names of any who may care to leave them with me, simply as an initial step to sending out papers from the Surgeon-General's office after this convention is over.

PRESIDENT.—We will pass on to the paper on the opportunity of the nurse in private duty. If nothing occurs to you, then we will take the discussion of the first paper, that of club-houses, hostelrys for nurses, etc. I am sure there are very many questions to be asked and answered regarding directories especially; we have had good reports of a very successful central directory in Cincinnati, and I hope there is someone present who can tell us about it.

MISS RINDLAUB.—The Alumnae Association of the Philadelphia Hospital have tried for some time to secure a directory at that hospital and have not succeeded. We would be very glad to hear from any city hospital where such a directory exists as to the methods by which it is managed and carried on, etc.

MISS BROBSON.—In the University of Pennsylvania Hospital they have established their own directory in the office of the hospital within the last year.

MISS WHITAKER.—The Hahnemann Hospital, Philadelphia, has had a directory for nurses from the organization of the institution, and they not only have a register for their own nurses, but they have a registry open to all nurses in Philadelphia in good standing.

MISS MILNE.—The Presbyterian Hospital, like the Hahnemann, has had a directory for nurses since the starting of the Training-School.

MISS CUMMISKEY.—The Jefferson Medical College has had a directory for their nurses for ten or eleven years, and this has been kept by the Training-School.

PRESIDENT.—Is there in Philadelphia a central directory?

MISS MILNE.—There is a central directory at the College of Physicians, not managed by nurses.

MISS WHITAKER.—There is a central directory at the College of Physicians, but they are so narrow that they will not admit homeopathic graduates.

Miss Davis gave a sketch of the Boston Nurses' Club and its success in maintaining a general directory.

MISS NEVINS.—I think we all understand perfectly well that a great many hospitals have their own directories, but what we want is to harmonize the different hospitals in cities and have one central directory. In a city like Washington we want a central directory. We have been writing to the different cities, and I did hope to hear from the Cincinnati organization, because it is said that that one has been in working order for about six years and has been a success. Is there no other central directory outside of that city that has been a success? And if it is a success, is a graduate nurse at the head of it, is a doctor at the head of it, or who is at the head of it?

MISS GILES.—In Pittsburg we have a central directory, which I think is not quite so narrow as in Philadelphia. It is managed by the Academy of Medicine in Pittsburg, but they employ a homœopathic graduate and she has charge of the directory, and it has been a success there; I do not think there is any trouble in the directory at all; it has been a success financially and otherwise. Everything is satisfactory.

MISS NUTTING.—We do not find it difficult to understand that directories so managed have been financial successes. We have very clear accounts from many sources and covering a pretty long period that they have been marked financial successes, so much so, in fact, that it seems to me we ought to feel highly encouraged about undertaking such an enterprise of our own. We are tolerably sure that ultimately the small directory will give way to the larger general directory managed entirely by nurses, which will meet fully the needs of the public. Such a change is in accordance with sound business principles as a saving of machinery, of time, people, and salaries. It is one of the trusts which one would like to promote, and I have no hesitation in suggesting a merger for directories.

MISS DAVIS.—I think that Miss Ayres, from Worcester, could tell us all about this. She comes fresh from doing just that kind of work, and I believe was a little delayed in order to finish up the work of starting this directory.

MISS AYRES.—The graduate nurses in Worcester have organized for the purpose of conducting a central directory, and it is entirely under our control, managed by a nurse with help from some other person. We hope that in a few weeks it will be established and in good running order. I can tell you more about it in another year.

MISS McMILLAN.—We have no central directory, but we are very much interested and hope within the next few months that the State association may organize one.

MISS WOOD.—We have had a registry for the last eight years in St. Paul conducted by a nurse. We have a membership of one hundred and fifteen active nurses and we have not had a particle of trouble.

MRS. HANGER.—We have a local association of graduate nurses; the membership is about sixty. In connection with this association we have a registry which is controlled by the officers of the association. The registry is conducted by a druggist in his store, and he receives nothing for it. It is absolutely in control of the officers of the association, and the funds are used for its benefit. It is very successful, and the association takes in graduates in good standing of any school.

MISS NEVINS.—Evidently the whole secret of the success of a central directory is lighting upon the right woman for the head,—a fair-minded woman, one in whom all nurses from all schools can have perfect confidence,—and it seems to me that that is all there is to do.

PRESIDENT.—We will be obliged now to close this discussion. We have some reports from committees, and we will now hear from them. There was a committee appointed last year to consider the affiliation of this association with the Red Cross for active service. That committee begs to have its report deferred until another year, but the chair would like to call upon Miss Nutting for some suggestions along that line.

Miss Nutting spoke of the reorganization of the Red Cross; said that in some States, Ohio for one, nurses were on the committee, and thought it a proper time to ask the Superintendents' Society to appoint a committee from that body

to confer with the one from the Associated Alumnae, and would make a motion to the effect that we ask the Superintendents' Society to appoint a committee to confer with the committee appointed by the Associated Alumnae in all work pertaining to affiliation with the Red Cross organization.

Seconded by Miss Rhodes and carried.

PRESIDENT.—We will now listen to the invitations which we have in regard to the meeting-place for next year, and motions to that effect will be in order.

MISS THORNTON.—The only one I have actually on paper is that from Detroit, from the Detroit Graduate Nurses' Association, which was sent us last year and which has been extended verbally many times before and since.

MRS. FOURNIER.—I move that the invitation to hold our next convention in Detroit be accepted.

Seconded by Miss Whitaker and carried.

Mrs. Gretter spoke of the help and impetus she felt the holding of the convention in Detroit would be for the Michigan nurses, and assured the Associated Alumnae of a hearty welcome.

MISS CABANISS.—Richmond, Virginia, will be highly pleased to extend its hospitality, so that if not too premature Richmond extends its invitation now to hold the annual meeting there in 1907.

PRESIDENT.—We will now call for the report of the Committee on Resolutions.

MISS TIFFET.—The Committee on Resolutions has pleasure in presenting the following report:

Resolved, That the Nurses' Associated Alumnae of the United States, in Eighth Annual Convention assembled, extend to the committee which has expended so much time and thought in the preparation of the excellent and instructive programme presented at these meetings, to the ladies who have prepared and presented the various subjects in such an interesting manner, and to Miss Nevins and the graduate nurses of Washington for the excellent arrangements made for the meetings, the charming reception, and the hospitality shown throughout the week a most sincere vote of appreciation.

"ALICE O. TIFFET,
"EMMA ROTHFUS,
"ANNA M. RINDLAUB."

PRESIDENT.—You have heard these resolutions, and we will place them on file.

MISS HOLLISTER.—I move that a committee be appointed by the president of this association, consisting of two or more superintendents and of two or more members of this association, the number from each side being equal, to consider and map out a plan by which our middle class of people may be nursed in their own homes by graduate nurses, the committee to report at next year's meeting.

Seconded by Miss Frederick and carried.

PRESIDENT.—And now we come to that interesting part of our programme, the report of the judge of election. Miss Milne will present that report to you now.

MISS MILNE.—It is my pleasure to announce to you that the following officers were elected: President, Miss Annie Damer; first vice-president, Miss Georgia M. Nevins; second vice-president, Miss Jane A. Delano; secretary, Miss Nellie M. Casey; treasurer, Miss Annie Davids; directors, Miss Harriet Fulmer and Miss Mary M. Riddle.

MISS RIDDLE.—I have the great honor to present to you your new president, Miss Annie Damer. [Applause.]

MISS DAMER.—It gives me great pleasure to receive this welcome from the members, and while I recognize the difficulties in our way, I appreciate also the growth of interest and coöperative work that has characterized our association in the last four years, since I had the honor of being elected before. I now ask for that coöperation still further, especially as you know that a change of officers makes it so much harder for us to take up the work and carry it on just where it was left off. But in going away from this great gathering which has been such an inspiration and such a help to us, we feel that we must carry this inspiration back to our homes. I say again that I appreciate your reception and the great honor you have done me, and I hope that we will have even a more enthusiastic meeting, if that were possible, next year when we meet in Detroit.

MISS NEVINS.—I think the association should give a rising vote to show its appreciation to the outgoing president for her splendid work in this association.

Vote unanimous.

MISS DAVIS.—Madam President, we have some other outgoing officers to whom this association should give a rising vote in appreciation of their services and their great work, and that is the secretary and treasurer.

Miss Frederick moved that a rising vote of thanks be given the treasurer and secretary.

Seconded and carried by a unanimous vote.

MISS RIDDLE.—I would like to say for the outgoing people that we wish that we had it all to go over again and knew as much as we know now to begin with.

MISS DAMER.—Before adjournment we would like to call a meeting of the new officers and directors of the association to meet immediately after adjournment to appoint the Executive Committee for the following year. Also remember that before leaving the delegates and voting members must get together and appoint a Nominating Committee for the next year.

The following nominations were made for members of the Nominating Committee: Miss Whitaker, of Philadelphia; Miss Keith, of Rochester; Miss Cabaniss, of Richmond, Va.; Miss Tippet, of Boston; Miss Drown, of Boston; Miss Hanson, of Philadelphia; Miss Brobson, of Philadelphia; Miss Keating, of Buffalo; Miss Miner, of Richmond; Miss Giles, of Pittsburg.

MISS WHITAKER.—I move that the result of the election of a Nominating Committee be made known to the Executive Committee.

Motion seconded by Miss Rhodes and carried.

The meeting was declared adjourned to meet in Detroit in 1906.

Miss Agnes D. Randolph, judge of election for members of the Nominating Committee, handed to the Executive Board the following names of members elected to the office: Miss M. Margaret Whitaker, Philadelphia; Miss S. H. Cabaniss, Richmond; Miss Mary L. Keith, Rochester; Miss Emma J. Keating, Buffalo; Miss Alice O. Tippet, Cromwell, Conn.,

[Members wishing to look over former records of the Associated Alumnae will find a complete file in the library of the Bureau of Education and in the Congressional Library in Washington, in the New York Public Library, and in the Education Department of the State of New York in Albany.]

Respectfully submitted,

MARY E. THORNTON,

Ex-Secretary.

August 1, 1905.